

Seeing the Sound: A System for Learning about Puget Sound Using Model Visualizations and *In-situ* Field Experiences

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Abstract

Puget Sound is a complicated estuary and an excellent place to learn about oceanographic concepts. In a partnership program with educational researchers at the University of Washington, Ocean Inquiry Project (OIP) has created a Web-based system for exploring a numerical model of Puget Sound. Since 1999, OIP has involved introductory level oceanography students in field-based research experiences on Puget Sound. OIP participants are primarily community college oceanography classes, who get onto the Sound to sample a number of monitoring stations using a CTD and plankton nets. Using our new model exploration system, students will be able to investigate the Sound before getting into the field, thus getting exposure to additional facets of oceanographic science. The system is available to anyone with access to the Web; using this tool for quick insight into the circulation of Puget Sound will form an excellent precursor to more in-depth investigations, both by interested laypersons and researchers alike. Finally, the computer-based and field-based curricula will be evaluated in order to compare which approach helps students best learn oceanographic concepts about Puget Sound. For additional information regarding the system, see <http://www.oceaninquiry.org/modelvis/>.